



Consultation on possible changes to school sessions and the school week

Please take part –
we will listen to your views

21 January 2008

I am writing to ask for your views on possible changes to the way we organise our school sessions (term time and holiday dates) and the length of the school week. We are seeking views from parents, pupils, staff, parent councils, local businesses and anyone else with an interest in our proposals.

Session/Holiday Dates

We last consulted on session/holiday dates in 2006 and at the time a number of schools and parents asked us to consider more radical changes such as a two week holiday in October and a longer break in February. One of the teachers' unions has also asked us to consider rebalancing the year with four terms of a similar length – autumn, winter, spring and summer.

As part of our work to improve our energy efficiency, we have also been looking at session and holiday dates. The maximum environmental advantage would be to have shorter summer breaks, with longer winter holidays and so reduce the very significant cost of heating the schools during the cold months.

There is also a view (but no hard evidence to support this) that longer holidays in the winter months (which is the peak time for sickness of both pupils and teaching staff) would improve attendance and might therefore impact upon attainment levels for pupils.

Within this leaflet we have put forward three new options for you to consider. **These are just proposals – before any decision is made to change our traditional approach we want to listen to your views and it may well be that having heard your views, the Council will decide to stay with our existing pattern.**

To make comparing the effect of any changes easier to see we have used the 2009/10 year as the basis for all three options.

When setting the holiday dates the following points are usually considered – some of which are modified in the new proposals.

- The one fact we cannot change is the length of the school year – schools must open for pupils on 190 days and provide 5 days additional in service training for teachers. These five days are part of the requirement to provide 35 hours of continued professional development (CPD) for every single teacher, each year.
- To enable schools and pupils to participate in our local festivals, schools also have the right to set 3 days as casual or local holidays. Schools are asked to work together in clusters to set the dates so that school transport and lunches are not disrupted. (In total each school year is planned as 198 days – 190 for pupils; 5 days for teacher in service and 3 days for local holidays).
- That the main summer break incorporates the traditional Trades holidays within the various towns and communities in the Borders.

- The closure of schools for the summer has traditionally been in the last week in June.
- The Christmas break should not be less than 10 working days.
- The Spring holiday period should normally be the first two weeks in April and that if Good Friday falls outwith this period then arrangements should be made for it to be taken as a holiday – with an amendment to another school date.
- There has traditionally been a full week's holiday in the second week in October.

Possible Changes to the School Week

We would like to hear your views on possible changes to the pattern of the school week. Instead of each school day being the same length, the change could see the school days on Monday to Thursday being a little longer but then every school would finish at 12noon on every Friday. So the effect is a four and a half day week – without any reduction in total hours in school – known in the teaching world as an asymmetric week. A number of Scottish Authorities have operated this pattern for many years.

The principal benefits are that the vast majority of teacher training sessions and management meetings for headteachers and school staff could then be arranged for Friday afternoons. This would cut the number of days we have to release teachers from classes to attend meetings or training. We know from your feedback that parents of primary pupils do not like their class teachers being out of school with cover being provided on a frequent basis by a supply teacher. Another advantage is that in the dark winter months, pupils would have at least one afternoon a week when they would be home in daylight. There is also no doubt that this change to the school week would result in financial savings for the Council.

The principal disadvantage is that working parents would have to make child care arrangements for Friday afternoons. While it may be possible to arrange some achievement activities (sports, dance, craftwork, Duke of Edinburgh Awards etc) for Friday afternoons, this would need to be with the support of private and voluntary bodies and would not offer opportunities for all pupils. In rural areas, where lack of transport is an issue, provision of such activities could be even more difficult.

As with the holiday dates, no decision has yet been made but we do want to hear your views ... and I would assure you that your views will be considered as part of the decision process. I also want to stress that any decision on moving to this would have to be consistently applied across the Borders.

I do hope you will take this opportunity to participate and influence these important decisions. Within this leaflet we have included response forms, or you can write or email your response to me, using the addresses below and on page 12.

The closing date for responses is 14 April 2008.

**GLENN RODGER
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

**Education & Lifelong Learning, Scottish Borders Council,
Council HQ, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose TD6 0SA
schoolconsultations@scotborders.gov.uk**

Holiday Dates 2009 – 2010

OPTION 1 – PROPOSES MINOR CHANGES TO THE SCHOOL YEAR

Key	Yellow Background = In Service Dates
Good Friday = 2 April	Pink Background = Holiday Dates
Black Text (Bold) = School Dates	Grey Background/White Text = Possible Casual Holiday Dates

August 2009

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
		17	18	19	20	21
		24	25	26	27	28
		31				

September 2009

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
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		7	8	9	10	11
		14	15	16	17	18
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October 2009

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
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November 2009

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		16	17	18	19	20
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December 2009

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January 2010

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February 2010

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		22	23	24	25	26

March 2010

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April 2010

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
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May 2010

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June 2010

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July 2010

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		12	13	14	15	16
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The dates shown for casual holidays are indicative only – actual dates will be set in line with individual clusters.



Consultation Response

OPTION 1 – PROPOSES MINOR CHANGES TO THE AGREED PROGRAMME

Your Name:

Address:

Status (e.g. parent, teacher, pupil or local employer etc):

We want to know if this option would be acceptable to you and your family, business or community – or do you have alternative proposals? Please mark any suggestions on the calendar shown on page 4 and return it with your response.

Please continue on a separate sheet if required.



Holiday Dates 2009 – 2010

OPTION 2 – PROPOSES MOVING TO A FOUR TERM YEAR

Key Good Friday = 2 April	Black Text (Bold) = School Dates (Summer Term)
Yellow Background = In Service Dates	Blue Text (Bold) = School Dates (Autumn Term)
Pink Background = Holiday Dates	Red Text (Bold) = School Dates (Winter Term 2)
Grey Back./White Text = Poss. Casual Holiday Dates	Green Text (Bold) = School Dates (Spring Term)

August 2009

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
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		17	18	19	20	21
		24	25	26	27	28
		31				

September 2009

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October 2009

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November 2009

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December 2009

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January 2010

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
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		4	5	6	7	8
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		18	19	20	21	22
		25	26	27	28	29

February 2010

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
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		8	9	10	11	12
		15	16	17	18	19
		22	23	24	25	26

March 2010

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
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		22	23	24	25	26
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April 2010

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May 2010

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June 2010

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July 2010

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
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The dates shown for casual holidays are indicative only – actual dates will be set in line with individual clusters.



Consultation Response

OPTION 2 – PROPOSES TO CREATE TERMS WHICH ARE MORE EQUAL IN LENGTH

Your Name:

Address:

Status (e.g. parent, teacher, pupil or local employer etc):

We want to know if this option would be acceptable to you and your family, business or community – or do you have alternative proposals? Please mark any suggestions on the calendar shown on page 6 and return it with your response.

Please continue on a separate sheet if required.



Holiday Dates 2009 – 2010

OPTION 3 – PROPOSES MAJOR CHANGES TO THE CURRENT PROGRAMME

Key	Yellow Background = In Service Dates
Good Friday = 2 April	Pink Background = Holiday Dates
Black Text (Bold) = School Dates	Grey Background/White Text = Possible Casual Holiday Dates

August 2009

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
		10	11	12	13	14
		17	18	19	20	21
		24	25	26	27	28
		31				

September 2009

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
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		14	15	16	17	18
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October 2009

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
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November 2009

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
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December 2009

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		21	22	23	24	25
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January 2010

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February 2010

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		15	16	17	18	19
		22	23	24	25	26

March 2010

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
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April 2010

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May 2010

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		24	25	26	27	28
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June 2010

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July 2010

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Consultation Response

OPTION 3 – PROPOSES LONGER WINTER AND SHORTER SUMMER HOLIDAYS

Your Name:

Address:

Status (e.g. parent, teacher, pupil or local employer etc):

We want to know if this option would be acceptable to you and your family, business or community – or do you have alternative proposals? Please mark any suggestions on the calendar shown on page 8 and return it with your response.

Please continue on a separate sheet if required.



Changes to the School Week

Current pattern Monday – Friday:

Generally* 5 hours a day – 9am – 3pm

*actual times vary from school to school and between primary and secondary schools

Proposal

- An extra half an hour longer day from Monday to Thursday
 - For example if your school is open from 9am – 3pm the new times could be 8.45am – 3.15pm
- Reducing the lunch break by 15 minutes from Monday to Thursday
- School finishes at lunch time on Friday
- Friday lunch break could be at 12 noon or say at 12.45 after lunch is eaten
- The shorter Friday might also apply to school nursery classes

Advantages

- Most continued professional development for teaching staff, and meetings for headteachers and other senior school staff could be arranged on the Friday afternoons. This could also provide opportunities for school staff to work together during the school day. It would also reduce the number of times a class teacher is away from class in primary schools, improving the continuity of teaching.
- In the dark winter months, pupils would be home for one afternoon a week in daylight.
- There would be cost savings for the Council, with a reduction in supply teacher costs – and make it easier to recruit sufficient supply teachers to cover for meetings, training and staff sicknesses.

Disadvantages

- Working parents would have to make child care arrangements for Friday afternoons.
- While some achievement activities such as sports or music could be arranged for Friday afternoons, it would not be possible to provide an activity for every pupil. This would not be possible without the support of voluntary bodies and the private sector who might charge parents for activities.
- For children living in rural communities participation in achievement activities would be more difficult.



Consultation Response

CHANGES TO THE SCHOOL WEEK

Your Name:

Address:

Status (e.g. parent, teacher, pupil or local employer etc):

Please give us your views on changing the pattern of the school week to 4.5 days a week, with longer days on Monday to Thursday and school finishing at 12 noon on Fridays.

We want to know if this option would be acceptable to you and your family, business or community – or do you have alternative proposals?

Please continue on a separate sheet if required.



Please send your response by 14 April 2008 to:

Holiday Dates Consultation Director
Education & Lifelong Learning
Council Headquarters
Newtown St Boswells
Melrose TD6 0SA

Or email to: schoolconsultations@scotborders.gov.uk

You can download further copies of this document on the school pages of the SBC website: www.scotborders.gov.uk/life/educationandlearning/schools

This document is available on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting us at the address below. Leona Bendall or Tracey Graham (tel: 01835 826592) can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

In addition, if you find any parts of this document, or any words, difficult to understand please contact Leona Bendall who will be happy to explain it to you.

Contact Details

Post: Leona Bendall (address as above)
Communication & Policy Manager

Telephone: 01835 826592

E-mail: lbendall@scotborders.gov.uk